

# V. R. E. A. C

Victims' Rights Enforcement Advisory Commission

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## Minutes

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014**

**Legislative Office Building, Room 1B**

**300 Capitol Ave., Hartford**

**2:00 – 4:00p.m.**

1. Welcome and Introductions --- Call to Order 2:09 pm

a. Membership Introductions

**Members Present:** Hakima Bey-Coon, Esq., Merit Lajoie, Hon. Patrick Carroll, III, Linda J. Cimino, Karen Martucci (in place for Scott Semple), Carleton J. Giles, Janice Heggie Margolis, Karen Jarmoc, Kevin T. Kane, Esq., Jillian Knox, Anne Mahoney, Esq., Jessica Pizzano, Bethany Phillips, Esq., James C. Rovella, Dora B. Schriro, and Andrew Woods

**Members Absent:** Laura Cordes, Mario T. Gaboury, Esq., Ana Gonzalez, Dawn Luddy, and Susan O. Storey, Esq.

b. Approval of the Minutes – November 5, 2014

There were no changes to the minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Carleton J. Giles, and seconded by Hon. Patrick Carroll, III.

c. Commission Correspondence

Linda Fay Wilson submitted a letter suggesting possible name changes for the Office of the Victim Advocate. The four ideas have been incorporated in the entire list of optional name changes for the Office of the Victim Advocate.

2. Presentations by Commission members

\*Andrew Woods, Hartford Communities that Care, Inc.

-Andrew Woods shared three recommendations:

- To expand the availability of mental health and other restitution services to persons under the age of 18 who were non-family witnesses of a violent crime.
- Insure that indigenous groups and agencies receive the technical assistance and support to assist crime victims in urban areas where there are limited resources but high demand for support.
- Establish a Connecticut State Commission on Urban Violence to examine the causes of violence in our cities and to make recommendations to the Governor and other law makers on what can and needs to be done to address this issue.

\*Jessica Pizzano, Survivors of Homicide

-Jessica Pizzano shared five recommendations:

- Creation of Victim Service Unit in every law enforcement agency
- Additional Victim Service Advocates

- Sensitivity training for law enforcement officers in communicating with victims
- Cross training of all criminal justice professionals
- Additional funding allotted to non-profit organizations

\*Jillian Knox, New Haven Police Dept. -Victim Services Unit

- Officer Jillian Knox explained all the specific steps and actions taken to serve victims in the Victim Service Unit of New Haven. She also recommended creating a Victim Service Unit in every law enforcement agency in Connecticut.
- There was discussion to have a Victim Service Unit in certain regions across the state to begin with.
- Commissioner Schriro noted that the Connecticut State Police Department is committed on creating a Victim Service Unit as well.

\*Dawn Luddy, Crime Victim Representative

-Dawn Luddy was not present.

\*Janice Heggie Margolis, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, CT

-Janice Heggie Margolis spoke about two issues that impact victims of D.U.I. related car crashes:

- When a victim's family hires a civil attorney, they hire someone who is not familiar with the criminal justice system. It is almost impossible for victims to obtain information from state attorneys because their civil attorney is usually not present and the state's attorney will not speak to the victim if the victim has an attorney.
  - Kevin Kane, Anne Mahoney, and Judge Carroll explained that if the victim is represented by a civil attorney concerning the same subject matter as the criminal prosecution, then the prosecutor has an ethical obligation not to speak to the victim unless he/she has a waiver from the victim's attorney.
- In Connecticut when you kill someone in an alcohol related crash and charged with manslaughter in the second degree, most offenders only receive a 2-5 year sentence, yet have a maximum sentence of 10 years by law. On assault charges, these offenders are only receiving 1-2 years. Victims of alcohol car related crashes would like to see justice and for the offenders to be in prison for the full sentence of 10 years or 5 years on assault charges.

### 3. Discussion of Commission's Recommendations

Merit J. Lajoie suggested commission members to think about the following options:

- a. Extension of the Commission
- b. Longevity of the Commission and its work
- c. Composition of the Commission's membership
- d. Continuity of public hearings

### 4. Public Hearing Summaries

-Members received a document with a compilation of feedback from victims of all four public hearings. Hakima Bey-Coon asked members to identify any issues they also heard during the public hearings and let her know by phone or email. As a result, the document can be updated and the new information will be disseminated.

-There was discussion as to whether or not to categorize each recommendation to the separate subcommittees due to time constraints.

-Hakima Bey-Coon mentioned that the Governor's office is interested if the commission already is aware of solid recommendations that we are going to be making. They are ready to receive those if we can provide them, despite the readiness of the formal recommendations and report.

-Anne Mahoney suggested that the three key issues to recommend would be to amend the constitution, decide on a universal definition of crime victim, and change the name of the OVA.

5. Subcommittee Recommendations

-Subcommittees will continue to work on their recommendations.

6. Other Business

No other Business.

7. Next Meeting Date – December 3, 2014:

- a. Discussion of a Constitutional amendment
- b. We will have a final discussion and vote concerning the universal definition of crime victim. (No proxy voting)
- c. Discussion of name change for the OVA
- d. Extension of work

8. Adjournment at 4:03 pm